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House panel urges new curbs on US acts against Ni

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WASHINGTON - The Reagan Administration's policy of covert operations against Nicaragua received its sharpest response from Congress yesterday, as a House Foreign Affairs subcommittee voted new limits on the actions and the chairman of the House Intelligence Committee said he is considering cutting CIA funds for operations there.

Despite strong protests by the State Department, the House subcommittee on Western Hemisphere affairs approved a far-reaching ban on military operations in or against Nicaragua. Rep. Edward Boland (D-Mass.), chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, has called a meeting today of his panel members to consider action of their own.

The proposal now goes to the full Foreign Affairs Committee.

In his first public comments on the controversy, Boland said he was concerned about "apparent violations" of restrictions adopted in the last Congress. With its direct authority over the CIA budget, the Intelligence Committee is in the strongest position to act to limit operations by cutting off funds.

It was that committee which first attached the restriction as part of the Intelligence Authorization Act adopted last year, and though much of that document remains classified, it is believed to define even more narrowly how the funds are to be used.

"It appears to be in violation of the amendment," said Boland in reference to the military assistance aid. The language adopted last year forbids any military aid or training for the "purpose of overthrowing the government of Nicaragua."

"Beyond that," he said, "it certainly appears to be in violation of the conference re-

port [on the Intelligence Authorization Act.]"

As Intelligence Committee chairman, Boland was the prime sponsor of the amendment that became public in December. Though the language was not as restrictive as many critics wanted, it was seen as a warning to the CIA and Administration not to go too far in their aid to insurgents opposed to the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. In recent weeks, as the fighting has expanded, concern has grown in Congress, and the controversy poses a major test for intelligence committees in both houses.

Sen. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.), chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, after a lengthy briefing with William Casey, head of the CIA, and the State Department, said no violation has occurred. But House Democrats are clearly more concerned about what they see as institutional and policy questions.

"Eddie [Boland] did them [the Administration] a favor by defusing that whole issue and he's been hung out to dry on that amendment," said Rep. Norman Mineta (D-Calif.), a member of the House Intelligence Committee. "He did them a favor and they haven't reciprocated. ... We cannot provide a 'cover' for the Administration because otherwise the Intelligence Committee loses credibility with other members."

A cautious man, Boland met late yesterday with Casey and will be reluctant to proceed now without first establishing a consensus in his committee today. But for the first time he indicated that he hoped members would consider cutting funds from the CIA authorization as one option to block further military assistance to the insurgents.

Although they have no direct authority over CIA funding, liberals on the House Foreign Affairs

Committee are already pressing for tighter restrictions. The proposal put forward yesterday ensures a major role for Congress in approving any further covert operations in Nicaragua.

Modeled on a 1976 amendment

directed toward covert operations in Angola, the amendment would forbid any military assistance unless the President first certifies that the action is needed to meet national security interests and Congress approves his request under an expedited procedure.

"We think this is bad policy; we think this is bad law," said James Michel, a State Department official. But on a simple voice vote, the Democratic majority easily prevailed on this and a series of recommended amendments affecting military and economic assistance to the Central American region.

Among the other provisions adopted were significant cuts in proposed military assistance to El Salvador. The Foreign Affairs subcommittee rejected all of a \$50-million supplemental sought by the Administration and reduced proposed aid next year by more than a half. Tighter restrictions were adopted as conditions for this assistance, and for the first time, Congress would be given a veto power essentially to overrule the Administration if not satisfied that conditions regarding human rights violations and negotiations have been met.

Republicans bitterly protested, but the subcommittee is one of the most liberal in the House and conservatives will be in a stronger position in full Foreign Affairs Committee and on the House floor.

Though the Administration has refused to comment publicly, the initial justification for arming and training Nicaraguan insurgents was to help interdict arms shipments to leftist guerrillas in El Salvador. Officials have hinted broadly that they hope the anti-Sandinista attacks now will create pressure to bring Nicaragua into negotiations.